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Committee on Social Development

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Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda*
Consideration of a thematic focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of regional preparations for the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review (Bangkok, 17-20 November 2014)

Asia-Pacific road map for the 20-year review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The year 2015 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which were adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 and subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. As mandated in United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/18 of 24 July 2013, the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at its fifty-ninth session in 2015. In support of the 2015 global review, and through the same resolution, the Economic and Social Council encouraged regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level could be fed into the 2015 review, and called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which was held in June 2000.

In anticipation of the global review and resulting outcome, ESCAP, in accordance with its programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015 and in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, will lead the regional review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific. The regional review process will provide a critical opportunity for delineating achievements and challenges in implementation of the Platform for Action in the last 20 years, as well as for identifying regional priorities and strategies for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, particularly in the context of the formulation of the development framework beyond 2015.

The Committee is invited to consider the proposed review process for the Asia-Pacific region and provide the secretariat with guidance in relation to the forthcoming Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review.

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I. Introduction

1. In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women and subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly through resolution 50/42. The Beijing Platform for Action constitutes a global framework for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

2. The Beijing Platform for Action calls upon Governments, the international community and civil society, including the private sector, to empower women and girls by taking action in 12 critical areas: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; the economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights; the media; the environment; and the girl child.

3. Every five years, progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is reviewed by the Commission on the Status of Women. There have been three reviews to date, in 2000, 2005 and 2010, with each review resulting in an outcome document that reinforces the global commitment to the empowerment of women and girls and outlines priority actions for the coming five years.

II. The Beijing+20 Review

4. In 2015, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will review implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly; the title of that session is Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century.

5. In support of the 2015 global review, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, through resolution 2013/18, called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The resolution also encouraged the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level could be fed into the 2015 review.

6. Furthermore, resolution 2013/18 strongly encouraged Governments to continue to support the role and contribution of civil society, in particular that of non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the

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outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In this regard, it called upon Governments to collaborate with relevant stakeholders at all levels in preparation for the 2015 review so as to benefit from their experience and expertise.

7. For Asia and the Pacific, the regional review will primarily involve:

(a) Conducting in the first half of 2014 a regional intergovernmental survey for the purpose of obtaining national perspectives for the preparation of a regional report on progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific, and background documentation for the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review;

(b) Holding in Bangkok from 18 to 20 August 2014 the third session of the Committee on Social Development, a legislative subsidiary body of ESCAP, as a preparatory meeting for the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review;

(c) Organizing civil society regional consultations on the Beijing+20 regional review;

(d) Convening in Bangkok from 17 to 20 November 2014 the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, through which it is anticipated that ESCAP member Governments would adopt a regional input into the global review process.

8. In Asia and the Pacific, it is intended that the 20-year review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would be a participatory process involving all member States, and supported by the ESCAP secretariat in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). In fostering inclusiveness, it is intended that the Beijing+20 regional review process for Asia and the Pacific also would engage civil society and other key stakeholders.

III. Analytical review

9. The engagement of member States in documenting progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is critical in determining regional priorities and the Asia-Pacific input into the global Beijing+20 review process. In the Asia-Pacific region, documentation of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will occur primarily through responses to the aforementioned regional intergovernmental survey.

10. The regional intergovernmental survey distributed to Asia-Pacific member States specifically was focused on the 12 critical areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action. The regional survey provided an opportunity for ESCAP member States to reflect upon the measures that had been undertaken, recognizing achievements and noting where further work was required in the effort to realize gender equality and women's empowerment.

11. Responses to the Asia-Pacific regional survey will be supplemented by information furnished in national reviews on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The *Guidance note for the preparation of national reviews* was prepared by UN-Women and the regional commissions in order to facilitate the conduct of comprehensive national reviews on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; it was issued to Member States by the Secretary-General in September 2013.

12. In addition to serving as an input into the review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific, the national reviews will also be used in the preparation of the documentation to be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session.

13. The *Guidance note* also contains questions on four substantive sections: overview analysis of achievements and challenges since 1995; progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action since 2009; data and statistics; and emerging priorities. Member States were requested to submit their national review reports by 1 May 2014.

14. The secretariat is compiling and analysing the data from both the completed regional surveys and national review reports as submitted by ESCAP member States. The data and analysis will constitute the substantive content of a publication on progress in realizing gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, as well as serve as background for the deliberations of, and provide the basis for the first draft of the outcome document for, the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review.

IV. Building intergovernmental consensus

15. The third session of the ESCAP Committee on Social Development will be convened in Bangkok from 18 to 20 August 2014 in cooperation with UN-Women; it will serve as a preparatory meeting for the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review.

16. The Committee on Social Development is invited to review the Beijing+20 regional review process and provide guidance and inputs on key issues to be included in the agenda of the aforementioned Asian and Pacific Conference. The Committee may also wish to consider the elements of a draft outcome document for the Asian and Pacific Conference, which was developed on the basis of responses from member States to the Asia and Pacific regional intergovernmental survey on the 12 critical areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as evidence drawn from national reviews and other recent studies.

17. The Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review will bring together ministers and senior officials from Asian and Pacific countries, including representatives of national women's machineries and key line ministries, as well as civil society representatives in observer capacity. It is anticipated that the regional report of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will inform the deliberations of the Conference and its consideration of the outcome document.

18. The Conference will be divided into a senior officials segment and a ministerial segment. In the senior officials segment there will be discussions on the findings of the regional review of progress and the remaining challenges in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific; the senior officials will also work towards agreement on a draft outcome document of the Conference. In the ministerial segment, policy statements will be made by member States prior to possible adoption of such an outcome document. Various side events are also expected to be held during the Conference on issues related to the 12 critical areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action.

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V. Stakeholder engagement

19. In order to promote a diversity of voices, broad engagement and ownership of outcomes, the Asia-Pacific regional review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will involve the participation of civil society representatives.

20. Civil society, including non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, will contribute to the regional review through various means. In February 2014, a consultation was held in cooperation with UN-Women involving civil society organizations from across Asia and the Pacific. The representatives of the participating civil society organizations reviewed achievements, remaining obstacles and future actions for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the region. They also discussed possible means of engagement in the review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the national, subregional and regional levels.

21. It is expected that a civil society forum will be held in the week prior to the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review. This forum will provide a platform for civil society organizations from the region to arrive at a consensus in relation to the draft outcome document and the messages that will be conveyed to member States during the Conference.

VI. Expected outcomes

22. In addition to the value that derives from dialogue between Governments in Asia and the Pacific, it is anticipated that the regional review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would culminate in an outcome document, prospectively in the form of a ministerial declaration.

23. The outcome document would be informed by the national review reports and regional survey findings on analysing achievements, challenges and current priorities in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment. Through the outcome document, member States would have the opportunity to: (a) reconfirm commitment to concerted action on the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action; (b) identify priority issues for attention; and (c) specify measures to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the era beyond 2015, with particular consideration being given to strengthening institutions, increasing financing, enhancing accountability, forging stronger partnerships and strengthening regional cooperation.

24. The aforementioned outcome document of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review would be considered by the Commission at its seventy-first session in May 2015.

25. Furthermore, both the regional report and the Conference outcome document would serve as inputs to the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015. In addition to guiding countries in Asia and the Pacific, the Conference outcome document would potentially be useful in contributing to the formulation of the global agenda for realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women for the coming 10 years.